

People Scrutiny Committee

14th December 2016

Education Scrutiny Group

Purpose of Report: Progress report

Since the last meeting of People Scrutiny Committee on 15th September 2016 the following work has been undertaken:

Education Scrutiny Group

Standards

The group met on the 19th September to receive the results for pupils in the Foundation Phase, Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 and the provisional results at GCSE and 'A' Level together with information on attendance and exclusions. The inspection profile for the academic year 2015-16 was also received and is outlined below:

	Current Performance	Prospects for Improvement	Category
Primary			
Leighton	Adequate	Adequate	Estyn Monitoring
Llangynidr	Good	Good	
Rhiw Bechan	Good	Good	LA Monitoring
Hafren	Adequate	Adequate	Estyn Monitoring
Golwg y cwm	Good	Good	Invited to submit good practice case study to Estyn
Oldford	Good	Good	LA monitoring
Bro Tawe	Good	Good	
Mount Street	Good	Good	
Meifod	Good	Good	
Brynhafren	Good	Good	
Llanfechain	Good	Good	
Secondary			
Builth High	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Special Measures
Llanfyllin	Adequate	Adequate	Significant Improvement
Llanidloes	Good	Good	
PRU	Adequate	Unsatisfactory	Estyn Monitoring

A report on School Standards is due to come to Cabinet on 7th February 2016 and the Joint Chairs have assigned the Education Scrutiny Group to undertake pre-cabinet scrutiny of this report.

ERW support for secondary schools causing concern

The group met on the 11th October to discuss with the Managing Director of ERW the support provided to secondary schools in Powys that are causing concern. The Managing Director outlined how the level of support that a school requires is identified and then put in place. She explained that there are a number of factors which need to be in place for a school to improve including:

- Leadership
- Effective and rigorous support and challenge
- Bespoke specific support
- Local authority engagement
- Targeted and focused use of resources
- School to school support

She explained that school to school support was particularly important in rural areas where there is a low turnover of staff to ensure that new ways of working are shared.

There are a number of other issues which impact on school improvement which include amongst others:

- Impact of school modernisation on morale
- Impact of small streams on budgets
- Small schools resulting in a teaching commitment for headteachers and senior leaders

Deficit budgets

The group met on the 16th November 2016 to undertake pre-decision scrutiny on the Cabinet Report on school deficit budgets. Observations from this meeting were submitted to Cabinet on 22nd November 2016. A copy of these observations are attached at Appendix A. Cabinet received these observations and confirmed that they would respond thereto within two months.

School Balances

The group met on the 28th November 2016 to undertake pre-decision scrutiny on the Cabinet Report on school budget balances. The outcome of that meeting will be reported verbally at Committee

The review of Fair Funding is due to come to Cabinet on 7th February 2016 and Joint Chairs have assigned the Education Scrutiny Group to undertake pre-decision scrutiny on this report.

Ysgol Cedewain

Education Scrutiny were assigned by Joint Chairs to scrutinise the deficit budget report on Ysgol Cedewain. This took place on 28th November 2016. The outcome of that meeting will be reported verbally to Committee.

School Asset Management Plan and Pupil numbers

The group met on the 25th November 2016 to receive a report on pupil projections and how they are calculated, together with a verbal update on the Schools Asset Management Plan.

A Council Seminar on pupil numbers was held on 7th December 2016.

The School Asset Management Plan is due to come to Cabinet on 17th January 2016 and Joint Chairs have assigned the Education Scrutiny Group to undertake pre-decision scrutiny on this report.

School Scrutiny Panel

The Education Scrutiny Group met on 29th September to monitor progress of the schools which had previously attended the School Scrutiny Panel. They also agreed to invite two schools to attend the School Scrutiny Panel in the autumn term. Llanfyllin High School was invited to attend on the 16th November and Caereinion High School were invited to attend on the 29th November. The meeting with Llanfyllin was postponed due to the Headteacher being on sickness absence. This meeting will be rearranged for the Spring Term. The meeting with Caereinion High School took place on 29th November and this school will now be monitored along with the other schools which have attended the School Scrutiny Panel.

ERW

The ERW Scrutiny Councillor Group met on 27th September 2016 in Haverfordwest where the following items were discussed:

- ERW Business Plan
- Estyn Inspection of ERW
- Vulnerable Learners and the Pupil Deprivation Grant
- SEN reform

As a result of the meeting three letters were sent to:

- Cllr Thomas Chair of ERW Joint Committee
- Mr M Rowlands – Chief Inspector ESTYN
- K Williams AM – Welsh Government Minister Education and Skills

A copy of these letters and the responses received to date are attached at Appendix 2.

Education Scrutiny Forward Work Programme

The work programme for the period to May 2017 is to be agreed but will include:

	School Asset Management Plan
	Education Standards Report
	Review of Fair Funding
	School Scrutiny Panel meetings

	Update on PRU and ALN
	Cashless system

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Sources/background papers:

Membership:

County Councillors: **D. R. Jones**,

A. Davies, E. R. Davies, M. Mackenzie, S. McNicholas K. Roberts-Jones, G. Vaughan.

Parent Governor Representative Mrs A. Davies and Mrs L. Jenkin.

Church Representative Mrs M. Evitts



Education Scrutiny Working Group – Observations on Unlicensed School Deficit Budget Cabinet Report November 2016

The Education Scrutiny Working Group met on the 16th November 2016 and considered the Cabinet report on Unlicensed School Deficit Budget Report which is due for consideration on 22nd November 2016. The Group make the following observations:

- Concern that the schools had been given a deadline of May 1st to submit budget plans, these were not all forwarded promptly and the position was not reported to Cabinet until 5th July 2016. The schools with unlicensed budgets were given until 16th September 2016 to submit their recovery plan. This deadline has clearly been exceeded if it has not been possible to submit a report to Cabinet until 22nd November 2016.
- The aim of both Finance and the Schools service is to bring forward budget planning, this is being included in the revisions to the Scheme for Financing Schools which is welcomed. It appears that some schools are delaying addressing their problems as there has been no particular requirement to meet deadlines in the past. The scrutiny group would support the service in requiring far earlier action to be taken.
- Scrutiny welcome the work being undertaken by schools finance to provide more benchmarking information and to ascertain what level of funding schools need to be financially viable. There is concern that dual stream schools may be in a difficult position and that if this is the case then this will become apparent by the work that is being undertaken. Scrutiny are concerned that there is a lack of support and challenge around the impact of curriculum planning and staffing levels in the secondary sector in the schools service and would expect that the schools service make available the necessary expertise to work with the finance service to help complete this research.
- Scrutiny are concerned that a small number of schools seem unwilling or unable to balance their budget and would suggest that, if a school is cannot produce a balanced budget then action needs to be taken promptly by the authority to address the position.
- Scrutiny would recommend that the Portfolio Holder ensures that the schools finance service have a clear timetable that is worked to in providing information

to schools which will ensure that schools are in a position to produce a budget within the timescale required.

Membership of the Education Scrutiny Group 16th November 2016:

County Councillor D R Jones, A W Davies, S McNicholas, K M Roberts-Jones,
G P Vaughan

Parent Governors: Mrs A Davies, Mrs L Jenkin

Church Representative: Mrs M Evitts